

**Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Gary Roughead
Delivers Remarks at the
Battle of Midway Commemoration Ceremony
June 3, 2011**

Good morning. It's so good to see everyone out here on such a terrific day in Washington, a terrific day in our Navy and in our nation's history.

Secretary Work thank you for being here with us. Secretary Pirie, thank you as well. Distinguished guests, to my colleagues from the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard; thank you so much for being a part of this ceremony. But for all of us, it comes as no surprise because we are always together. We've sailed together, we've fought together, we've sacrificed together in the past, in the present, and it will go on in the future. And I thank you for all that you and your fellow Marines and Coast Guardsmen do.

To the veterans who are here today, it is indeed an honor for us to join you, to honor you and those who fought alongside you so many years ago. We conceive of naval battles in terms of their strategic impact, the ships, the airplanes involved, and perhaps the commanders making the operational decisions, and in no case more so than with Midway, now 69 years ago with the stakes as high as they were, the number of ships, and the fine examples of leadership at sea in men like Spruance and Fletcher.

But then, as now, it was the American Sailor at the heart of our successes – Sailors like the gentlemen who are seated to my left. Again, it is an honor to be with you; and once more, I would like to call for a round of applause for their service, their sacrifice and that of their shipmates.

I have spoken here before about Midway in terms of strength of character and individual sacrifice, in terms of hope and determination on the part of a peace-loving people who driven to war. There is so much of all of that to admire in the history of how America's Navy shifted the balance of sea power in the Pacific.

But the theme of this year's commemoration also reminds us there was more to do in the Pacific even after the four carriers responsible for Pearl Harbor lay on the ocean floor.

Many battles followed this unparalleled clash at sea, and ultimate victory in World War II required much from our Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Army in the years that followed.

As we continue to provide for America's security and prosperity from the sea today, that is not a bad lesson for all of us Sailors to recall because today we continue to have 12,000 Sailors on the ground in the Middle East, and another 15,000 afloat in that area of operations providing

maritime security and about a third of the tactical aviation air cover for our troops on the ground in Afghanistan.

In fact, today as we assemble here in our nation's capital, 65,000 Sailors and over 40 percent of our force is deployed around the globe delivering on that legacy of maritime dominance left by the generation that fought and won at Midway.

I seek every opportunity to expound on that legacy because I believe it is integral to our leadership in the international system and in this environment especially, I remain concerned for what befalls us as a nation where we to forget the value of that dominance.

To believe sea power can be relegated to history with the grainy photographs we have of war at sea in the era of Midway is to draw the wrong conclusions about what American Sailors showed us there.

And it is to devalue all the hard work our Navy has done in the interim to advance global prosperity, in both peace and war.

My concern is not new, of course; it is as perennial as the affliction of 'sea blindness' from which our maritime nation – with its unique American advantages – invariably suffers.

Nimitz saw the same tendencies not three years after our Navy had just completed an unprecedented pacific campaign based on the foundation that was laid at Midway.

I am heartened by his prescription at the time, which demonstrates to me that while today's is a very different Navy, we remain true to the legacy forged there by seeking to deliver capabilities of enduring interest to the nation in new ways.

On his last day as Chief of Naval Operations, Nimitz wrote:

“Our present control of the sea is so absolute that it is sometimes taken for granted... [but] it can be perpetuated only through the maintenance of a balanced naval forces of all categories adequate to our strategic needs... which can flexibly adjust to the new modes of air-sea warfare and which are alert to develop and employ new weapons and techniques as needed.”

Now, as then, we have largely recognized the promise inherent in prevailing technological trends, and will be proved farsighted to have changed course and moved beyond the primacy of many of the systems that we have used in the past.

But I cannot stand here today and tell you honestly I don't think more course changes will be required, as they were seven decades ago and repeatedly over the course of the Navy's countless transitions before that.

I am perfectly comfortable allowing for the fact that how these disruptive technologies will become real capabilities and come together in a force that continues to go to sea, forward and balanced in our nation's best interests, is not yet clear.

What is patently clear to me, however, is that our persistent presence and engagement will be more important than ever to whether the mechanisms of global trade function through disruption and disorder, or whether globalization continues to be a broadly positive trend for more people in our world.

While today our maritime capabilities are not engaged in the destruction of adversary naval forces at sea as they were at the Battle of Midway and the Pacific Campaign, you can be assured that our forces are ready, prepared and able to do that again should that be required.

In this year of the centennial of naval aviation, our carriers continue to show enduring value of mobile power projection first demonstrated in earnest at Midway.

Our dominance now lies in our ability to prevent another Midway from coming to pass, to assure allies and maintain the access we need in our interests. Our dominance today is about the speed and flexibility of response the United States gets by having a global combat credible Navy able to maintain its operations forward.

That is how surface, submarine, and amphibious forces regularly deployed to build interoperability with our allies and partners and are able to change course on short notice create the conditions ashore for a no-fly zone that could be established in defense of the Libyan people.

It is also how we bring our unmatched electronic attack capabilities to bear on the improvised explosive device threat that was in Iraq. And that's how we sustain 30 percent of all air cover over a landlocked country from the sea; something we have been doing for nine years. And it's how we launch SEALs from Afghanistan to Pakistan to end a decade-long manhunt.

If we are to honor the legacy of our pacific veterans; if we recognize our leading role in the global use of the sea which delivers all the benefits Sailors like these secured for Americans almost 70 years ago, we must continue to defend it by thinking anew about how to maintain the offshore options our nation requires, and won't be able to find anywhere else other than in its Navy.

those of us wearing this uniform today are resolved to do just that, and to make clear for future generations exactly what was gained at Midway, and what we, too, will not lose.

Thank you very much.